

The Bad-Tempered Man (Dyskolos)

The papyrus codex of the *Dyskolos* was published in 1958, the first complete play of Menander to have been discovered in the sands of Egypt (see Introduction). It is damaged in places; there are several lacunae of four or more lines where the papyrus is torn and many gaps where half-lines, whole words, or a few letters are missing or illegible.

Characters

PAN (Prologue)

CHAIREAS, a toady

SOSTRATOS, a rich young man

PYRRHIAS, Sostratos' slave

KNEMON, an old misanthrope

THE GIRL, his daughter

DAOS, the old slave of Gorgias

CHORUS of worshippers of Pan

GORGAS, Knemon's son by a previous marriage

SIKON, a cook

GETAS, a slave of Gorgias' father

SOSTRATOS' MOTHER

SIMICHE, Knemon's old servant

KALLIPIDES, Sostratos' father

Silent characters:

PLANGON, Sostratos' sister

PARTHENIS, a pipe player

MYRRHINE, Gorgias' mother

DONAX and SYROS, slaves

The scene is set in Phyle, a mountainous district in central Attica. In the middle of the stage is the shrine of Pan and the Nymphs, to the right the house of the old misanthrope Knemon, to the left that of his son Gorgias.

Prologue

The god PAN enters from his shrine and addresses the audience.

PAN. You must imagine we're in Attica;
 Phyle's the place; the shrine* from which I come
 Belongs to Phyle's people and the men
 Who farm these rocky heights as best they can,
 A holy place exceedingly well known.
 This farm here on the right is Knemon's home,
 An utter misanthrope, cross-grained to all;
 He hates the crowd—he hates the crowd, I say?
 He's getting on, yet never in his life
 Has spoken willingly to anyone 10
 Or greeted anyone except me, Pan,
 His neighbour, as he must when passing by,
 And then he's promptly sorry that he spoke,
 I'm sure of that. And yet despite his ways
 He wed a widow whose first husband had
 Just died, leaving a son, a baby then.
 He fought with her not only in the day
 But most of every night—a wretched life.
 He had a daughter by her. Things got worse.
 But when her troubles were beyond repair, 20
 Her life laborious and harsh, the wife
 Went off back to the son she'd borne before.
 He had a little plot not far from here,
 Where now in hardship he supports himself,
 His mother, and one loyal family slave.
 The boy by now's become a lad with sense
 Beyond his years—experience brings men on.
 The old man with his daughter lives alone 30
 And has but one old servant; so he digs

And carries wood; it's work, work, work for him,
Hating his neighbours most, and wife, and then
The whole world to Cholargos* far below.
The girl, brought up in total innocence,
Remains unchanged. She cultivates the nymphs
Who live with me with careful reverence;
So she's persuaded us to have some care
For her; I've made a youth, a city boy,
Whose father's rich and farms a great estate
Not far from here, go hunting with a friend
And happen to come near her home; I've made
Him fall head over heels in love with her.
These are the main points; and the rest you'll see,
If you are willing; and willing you must be!
But look! I think I see this lover now
Draw near, together with his huntsman friend;
They're deep in talk about the whole affair.

40

[Exit into shrine]

ACT I

Enter SOSTRATOS and CHAIREAS from the right, deep in conversation.

CHAIREAS. What's that you say? You saw a freeborn girl
Give garlands to the Nymphs* here and you went
Away in love, at once? 50

SOSTRATOS. At once.

CHAIREAS. That's quick!

Had you decided as you left your home
To fall in love with someone?

SOSTRATOS. Chaireas,

You're laughing at me. I'm in a bad way.

CHAIREAS. I believe you.

SOSTRATOS. That is why I've come with you

To help me, since I think you are my friend

And very competent.

CHAIREAS. Well, Sostratos,

In cases of this sort, this is my policy:
 One of my friends falls for a courtesan
 And calls me in: I seize the girl at once
 And bring her; I get drunk, burn down the door,* 60
 Reject all sense! We don't know who she is
 But he must have her now. For slowness feeds
 Such love; quick action brings a quick relief.
 But someone speaks of marriage, a free girl,
 I am another man then; I inquire about
 Her family, finances, character;
 For now I leave my friend all I arrange
 In this affair to be a record for
 All time.

SOSTRATOS. Yes, very good. [*Aside*] But not quite what I want.

CHAIREAS. And now we must hear all the facts. 70

SOSTRATOS. I sent my fellow-huntsman, Pyrrhias,
 From home at dawn today.

CHAIREAS. To whom?

SOSTRATOS. To meet

The father of the girl or master of
 The house, whoever he may be.

CHAIREAS. Good god!

What are you saying?

SOSTRATOS. I was wrong. Perhaps

This sort of thing was not a servant's job.

But it's not easy for a man to see

What's best when he's in love. But I'm surprised

At his delay. I told him to return

At once when he had learnt the set-up here. 80

Enter PYRRHIAS from the left, running and breathless.

PYRRHIAS. Let me through! Look out! All of you, out of the way!

A raving loony's after me.

SOSTRATOS. What, boy?

PYRRHIAS. Run! Run!

SOSTRATOS. What's up?

PYRRHIAS. He's pelting me

With clods and stones. I'm done for.

SOSTRATOS. Pelting you?

Where are you going, fool?

PYRRHIAS [*stopping*]. Perhaps he's not

Still chasing me.

SOSTRATOS. He's not.

PYRRHIAS [*looking round*]. I thought he was.

SOSTRATOS. What do you mean?

PYRRHIAS. I beg you, let's get out.

SOSTRATOS. Where to?

PYRRHIAS. As far as may be from that door.

Some child of Woe, or else a man possessed

Or melancholy-mad, lives in the house here, 90

The man you sent me to—what agony!

I've stubbed and broken nearly all my toes.

SOSTRATOS. Good god! What's he been up to on his way?

Some drunken trick?

CHAIREAS. He's clearly off his head.

PYRRHIAS. No, Sostratos, by god, may I be damned

And blasted, if I am. Be on your guard!

But I can't speak. My breath is choking me.

[*He pauses for breath*]

I knocked at that door there and said that I

Was looking for the master of the house;

A miserable old woman answered me;

From where I'm standing now she pointed out 100

The fellow on the hill there wandering round

Unhappily and collecting pears, a load

Of trouble for himself.

CHAIREAS [*aside*]. How cross he is!

What next, my friend?

PYRRHIAS. I set foot on his plot

And walked towards him, and from some way off—

I wished to seem a friendly, tactful sort

Of man—I said, 'Father, I've come to see

You on a matter that's for your own good.'

Immediately he says, 'You're on my land;

You villain, what's your game?'; takes up a clod 110

And hurls it at my face.

CHAIREAS. To hell with him!

PYRRHIAS. I shut my eyes and said, 'God blast you!', then
 He took a stick this time and beat me up,
 Saying, 'What business have you and I
 Together? Don't you know the public road?'
 Shouting with all his might.

CHAIREAS. The farmer is
 Quite mad from what you say.

PYRRHIAS. But hear the rest:

I fled; he chased me for about two miles,
 First round the hill, then down below into
 This thicket, pelting me with clods and stones 120
 And pears when he had nothing else, a wild
 And savage beast, a barbarous old sod.
 Please, please, get out!

SOSTRATOS. No, that's the coward's way.

PYRRHIAS. But you don't know how dangerous things are.
 He'll eat us all.

CHAIREAS. Perhaps he is a bit
 Upset just now. And so I think we should
 Put off approaching him; for, Sostratos,
 You know, in everything success depends
 On finding the right time.

PYRRHIAS. That's sensible.

CHAIREAS. Poor farmers are sharp-tempered folk; he's not 130

The only one, they're nearly all like this.
 At dawn tomorrow I'll go to him alone—
 I know the house; now you go home and wait.
 That will be best.

[*Exit CHAIRES to the right*]

PYRRHIAS. Let's do just as he says.

SOSTRATOS. He's gladly taken an excuse to go.

It's clear he didn't want to come with me
 At all, and didn't like my marriage plans.
 [*To PYRRHIAS*] But you, may all the gods annihilate
 You utterly as you deserve, you rogue.

PYRRHIAS. But, Sostratos, please, what have I done wrong? 140

SOSTRATOS. You did some damage to his land, that's clear;
 You stole something.

PYRRHIAS.

I stole?

SOSTRATOS.

Did someone beat

You up when you were doing nothing wrong?

Enter KNEMON from afar left.

PYRRHIAS. Yes—here he is himself. I'm off, my friend,

And *you* can talk to him.

[*Exit PYRRHIAS right*]

SOSTRATOS.

I can't. In talk

I never can convince a soul. [*Looking at KNEMON approaching*]

What should

One say about this man? He does not seem

To have a very friendly look. God, no!

And what a rush he's in! I think I'll get

Back from the door. That's better. And, what's more,

He's shouting though he walks alone! He seems

To me to be unwell. But I'm afraid

150

Of him. By god, I am. And that's the truth.

Enter KNEMON from the left, talking to himself.

KNEMON. Now Perseus,* wasn't he a lucky man

In two respects? He could take wings on high

And never meet the men who walked on earth.

And then he had this gift with which he turned

All people who annoyed him into stone.

I wish I had that gift! Then there would be

No shortage of stone statues everywhere!

But now life's not worth living. No, it's not.

160

Men trespass on my land and chat to me.

[*Ironically*] I usually waste my time of course beside

The very road! Why, I don't even work

That part of my estate. I've left that bit

To avoid the passers-by. But now they chase

Me into the hills above. What swarming crowds!

But help! Here's someone else standing beside

My door!

SOSTRATOS [*aside*]. Does he intend to beat me up?

KNEMON. You can't find solitude, not anywhere,

Not even if you want to hang yourself.

170

SOSTRATOS [*coming forward*]. Is it me you're angry with? I'm waiting here

For someone, father, as I had arranged.

KNEMON. Just what I said! Do you take this for a park

Or public meeting place?* [*With heavy irony*] Well, if you want

To see someone, arrange to meet him here

Beside my doors; go on, by all means; yes,

Erect a bench, if that is what you want,

Or better still a council-room. [*As he enters his house*] Oh dear!

Malicious interference is the cause

Of all this trouble so it seems to me.

[*Exit into his house. SOSTRATOS is left alone on the stage*]

SOSTRATOS. This business requires, it seems to me,

No common effort, something more serious.

180

That's obvious. [*He reflects*] Getas, my father's slave,

Suppose I go to him? By heaven, I shall.

Yes, he's a ball of fire, experienced

In every kind of thing. He'll drive away

All the old man's bad temper, I'm quite sure.

For I refuse to tolerate delay.

Why, lots of things may happen in one day.

But someone's rattled on his door.

[*SOSTRATOS withdraws*]

The GIRL comes out of KNEMON's door, carrying a water pot.

GIRL.

Alas!

More trouble still! Oh, what shall I do now?

My nurse has dropped the bucket in the well.

190

SOSTRATOS [*aside*]. O father Zeus, Phoebus, and heavenly Twins,*

What beauty irresistible!

GIRL.

And Dad

Told me to get the water hot as he

Went out to work.

SOSTRATOS [*to the spectators*]. Friends, what am I to do?

GIRL. But if he learns of this, he'll beat her up

And kill her for her crime. It's not the time

For idle talk. O dearest Nymphs, I must

Take water now from you. I am ashamed,

If anyone is making offerings inside,
To bother you—

SOSTRATOS [*comes forward*]. But if you give the pot
To me, I'll fill it from the spring at once
And bring it back to you.

200

GIRL. O thank you. Please
Be quick.

SOSTRATOS [*aside, as he goes into the shrine*]. A country girl she is, but
how

Unlike a bumpkin. Gods above! what power
Can save me now?

[*A door rattles*

GIRL. But help! Who made that noise?

Is father coming back? Then I shall get
A hiding, if he catches me outside.

[*The girl retires to KNEMON's door. But it is the
door of GORGLAS' house that opens*

*Out comes DAOS, the old slave, talking to GORGLAS' mother who is
inside; he does not see the GIRL.*

DAOS. I've spent a long time working here for you,
While master digs alone. Now I must go
To him. [*As he moves off*] O damn you, cursed Poverty,
Why have we found you such a crushing weight?
Why do you settle down so long inside
Our house and make your home with us for good?

210

SOSTRATOS [*coming out of the shrine*]. Here, take the pot.

GIRL. Please bring it here.

DAOS [*aside*]. What does

This fellow want?

SOSTRATOS. Goodbye to you, and take
Good care of father.

[*Exit GIRL into KNEMON's house. SOSTRATOS soliloquizes,
while DAOS watches him*

Hell! Oh, misery!

Stop moaning, Sostratos! It'll be all right.

DAOS [*aside*]. What does he mean 'all right'?

SOSTRATOS. Don't be afraid.

Tell Getas clearly, as you planned to do

I still care for my sister. Father wants
To be a stranger to us, but don't let us
Be like him in misanthropy. For if
My sister fell into disgrace, I too must feel
The shame. Outsiders never care who was
To blame but only know the actual facts.
Come on, let's knock.

DAOS. Sir, Gorgias, I'm scared
Of the old man. If he discovers me
Approaching near his door, he'll string me up
At once.

GORGAS. He's rather difficult, it's true,
And quarrelsome; there's no way anyone
Could force him to reform, or change his mind
By good advice such as a friend might give.
He has the law behind him to prevent
Us using force; his character prevents
Persuasion—

250

DAOS. Stop a bit! We've not come here
For nothing; as I thought, he's coming back.

GORGAS. You mean the man there in that splendid cloak?

DAOS. That's him.

Enter SOSTRATOS from the right.

GORGAS. His looks at once show he's a rogue.

[DAOS and GORGAS withdraw]

SOSTRATOS. I did not find Getas within at home;

Mother, all set to make a sacrifice
To appease some god—I don't know which—she does
This every day and round and round the whole
District she goes, making her sacrifices—
Had sent him out to hire a cook. I wished
Her offerings luck and back I've come to deal
With matters here. I'll stop this roundabout,
I think, and speak out for myself. I'll knock,
So that I can no longer hesitate.

260

GORGAS [*comes forward*]. Young man, would you be willing to
attend

To something rather serious I want to say?

SOSTRATOS. Yes, very gladly. So say on.

270

GORGAS.

I believe

For every man, both rich and poor, there is
A limit to their fortune which brings change.

The wealthy man's success in life remains

Unbroken only for so long as he

Can bear his luck without committing wrong.

But when he comes to that, led on by his

Prosperity, he suffers then a change for worse.

The poor, as long as they do nothing wrong

280

In their distress but bear their cruel fate

With honour, still may come in time to win

Some credit* and expect a better lot.

What do I mean? Though you are very rich,

Don't put your trust in that and don't

Despise us poor men; prove yourself to all

Who see you worthy of good luck that lasts.

SOSTRATOS. But do you think I'm acting wrongly now?

GORGAS. You seem to me to have planned a wicked crime,

Intending to seduce a freeborn girl

290

Or watching for a chance to do a deed

Deserving death twice over.

SOSTRATOS.

Gods above!

GORGAS. It's certainly not right your idleness

Should upset us who never can be idle.

You surely know, a poor man, when he's wronged,

Is hardest of all men to tamper with.

First, he rouses pity,* then he treats

All that he's suffered not as simply wrong

But as an outrage.

SOSTRATOS.

Friend, as you may hope

To have some luck, please hear a word from me.

DAOS. Master, well said! May you be blessed for this!

300

[DAOS is *applauding* GORGAS' words, *disregarding*

SOSTRATOS' interruption

SOSTRATOS. You too, who speak before you know the facts.

I saw a girl here and I fell in love.

If that's the wrong you mean, perhaps I did
Do wrong. For what else can I say? Except
I don't come here to her but want to see
Her father. I'm freeborn, well-heeled enough,
And ready to accept her with no dowry,
And guarantee to cherish her for life.
But if I came here with some wrong intent
Or wanting to plot ill behind your backs, 310
May Pan here and the Nymphs now strike me dumb,
Right here, beside the house. Believe me, I'm most
Upset I seem to you that kind of man.

GORGAS. Well, if I spoke more hotly than I should,
Don't let that go on worrying you. For you've
Convinced me now and have me as your friend.
And I'm concerned in this, as I'm the girl's
Half-brother, let me tell you that, good friend.

SOSTRATOS. Good god, then you can help me with the rest. 320

GORGAS. Help? How?

SOSTRATOS. I see you have a noble heart—

GORGAS. I don't intend to pack you off with vain
Excuses; I will tell the simple truth.
There's never been a human in the past
Or in our own time like the father of
This girl.

SOSTRATOS. That old curmudgeon? Yes,
I think I know.

GORGAS. He's bad as bad can be.

He has this farm that must be worth a cool
Two talents;* yet he goes on farming it
Alone; he has no man to work with him,
No servant of his own, no labourer hired 330
From the vicinity, no neighbour even,
But just himself, alone. He'd be best pleased
If he saw no one, but he usually takes
His daughter with him when he goes to work
And only talks to her. Apart from her
He'd hate to speak to anyone. He says
He'll marry her to someone when he finds

At last a bridegroom something like himself.

SOSTRATOS. That must mean never.

GORGAS. So don't bother, friend;

You'll waste your labour. Leave his family

To bear the burden fortune's given us. 340

SOSTRATOS. Good god, man, have you never been in love

With anyone?

GORGAS. Impossible, my friend.

SOSTRATOS. Why's that?

What is to hinder you?

GORGAS. Thinking about

My present troubles never gives me time.

SOSTRATOS. I don't suppose you have; at least you talk

Like one with no experience in love.

You tell me to back off. The god* alone

Can stop me; it's no longer up to me.

GORGAS. Well then, you're doing us no wrong, but you

Are suffering pointlessly.

SOSTRATOS. Not, if I win

The girl.

GORGAS. You'll never win her, *as you'll see*,

If you will come with me *and stand by him*; 350

He's working in that valley just near us.

SOSTRATOS. Well then?

GORGAS. I'll make some chance remark about

Her marrying; for I myself would love to see

This happen. Straightaway he'll have it in

For everyone, and shout abuse at how

Men lead their lives. And if he sees you there,

Idle and proud, he won't endure the sight.

SOSTRATOS. Is he there now?

GORGAS. He's not, but very soon

He'll come out by his usual way.

SOSTRATOS. My friend,

Do you think he'll bring the girl with him?

GORGAS. He may,

Or maybe not.

SOSTRATOS. I'm ready then to go 360

Where you propose. But, please, give me support.

GORGAS: How?

SOSTRATOS. How, you ask? Come, let's push on.

DAOS [*intervenes*].

Well, then?

Are you to stand beside us while we work

Wearing that cloak?

SOSTRATOS. This cloak? Why ever not?

DAOS. Because he'll pelt you straightaway with clods,

And then abuse you as an idle pest.

No, you must dig with us. For seeing this,

He might perhaps endure a word from you,

Supposing you a farmer, poor like us.

SOSTRATOS. I'm ready to obey your every word.

370

[*He takes off his cloak and leaves it in the shrine*]

Lead on!

GORGAS. Why force yourself to suffer so?

DAOS [*aside*]. I'd like us all to work flat out today

And him to wrench his back and then to stop

Annoying us by coming here.

SOSTRATOS. Bring out a fork!

DAOS. Come and take mine. I'll mend the wall a while,

For that needs doing too.

SOSTRATOS. Then give it here.

[*To GORGAS*] You've saved my life—

DAOS. I'm off, young master, then.

You follow on!

[*Exit DAOS left*]

SOSTRATOS. For this is how I stand—

I die today or marry her and live.

GORGAS. If you are really saying what you feel,

380

Then all good luck to you.

[*Exit to the left*]

SOSTRATOS. O honoured gods above!

You thought you'd put me off by what you said

Just now, but no, you've made me doubly keen

To win her hand. For if the girl has not

Been brought up amongst women and has learnt

Nothing about life's evils from the tales

Some aunt or nanny tells to terrify,

But schooled by her own father liberally,

Who may be rough but hates all wickedness,
Surely he must be blessed who wins this girl.

[*He shoulders the mattock*

This mattock weighs a ton. It'll be the death 390

Of me. But still I must not now go soft,

When I have just begun to sweat it out. [*Exit to the left*

Enter SIKON, the cook, from the right, carrying a sheep; GETAS follows, well behind.

SIKON. A fine sheep I've got here, remarkable!

O, go to hell! If I lift him off the ground

And carry him, he gets hold of a fig branch

In his mouth and eats the leaves and pulls like mad.

But if I put him on the ground, he won't

Budge on. Our roles are topsy turvy; I,

The cook, am cut to pieces by the sheep,

As I haul him along the road just like a ship.*

But here with any luck must be the shrine 400

Where we will sacrifice. So greetings, Pan!

Hey! Getas, are you left so far behind?

GETAS emerges, carrying a mass of rugs and other clobber.

GETAS. Yes, for those blasted women tied a load

Four asses could not carry on my back.

SIKON. It looks as if a fairish crowd is due.

What stacks of rugs you're carrying!

GETAS.

What should I

Do now?

SIKON. Well, stick them here.

GETAS.

Then there you are.

You see, if she should have a dream and see

Pan of Paiania,* we'll be off for sure

To him at once, to make a sacrifice.

SIKON. Who saw a dream?

GETAS.

Don't wear me out, man.

SIKON.

Still,

Do tell me, Getas, who was it saw the dream?

410

GETAS. My mistress.

SIKON. Tell me what she dreamt she saw.
GETAS. You'll do for me. She thought that the god Pan—
SIKON. This Pan?
GETAS. Yes, this—
SIKON. Was doing what?
GETAS. Took hold of my young master, Sostratos,
SIKON. A nice young man—
GETAS. And fastened fetters on
His legs—
SIKON. Good god!
GETAS. Then gave him a rough coat
And fork and ordered him to dig the plot
Near by.
SIKON. How weird!
GETAS. And that is why we have
To sacrifice, so that this fearful dream
May turn out for the best.
SIKON. I understand.
Lift up this stuff and carry all inside.
Let's make some pretty beds of straw in there
And get all else prepared. Nothing must stop
The sacrifice when they at last arrive,
May all go well! Stop frowning, you poor chap!
I'll fatten you up properly to-day. [*Exit SIKON into the shrine*]
GETAS. Well, I have always praised you and your skill,
But all the same I don't trust you an inch.
[*Exit into the shrine*]

420

CHORAL INTERLUDE

ACT 3

KNEMON comes out of his house, speaking to SIMICHE over his shoulder.

KNEMON. Now lock the door, old woman; open up
To none till I return again, and that
Will be when it's completely dark I think.

*The party of worshippers appears from the right, led by SOSTRATOS'
MOTHER, who is followed by her daughter, PLANGON, the piper,
and slaves. KNEMON watches from his door.*

SOSTRATOS' MOTHER. Plangon, come on, speed up; we should
have made

430

The sacrifice by now.

KNEMON. What's this to-do?

A mob of people! oh, to hell with them.

MOTHER. Come, Parthenis, and play your pipe for Pan.

They say that one should not approach this god

In silence.

Enter GETAS from the shrine.

GETAS. Lord! You're safely here at last.

KNEMON [*aside*]. Good god, how odious!

GETAS. We've hung around

For ages waiting.

MOTHER. But is everything

All ready for us?

GETAS. Yes, it is. At least

The sheep is ready—almost dead.

MOTHER. Poor thing!

It will not wait for you to take your time.

Go in and get the basket* ready and

440

The holy water and the sacred grain.

[*To KNEMON*] What are you gaping at, you half-wit, you?

[Exit with the sacrificial procession into the shrine]

KNEMON. O, go to hell the lot of you! They stop

Me working. For I can't desert the house

And leave it empty. But the Nymphs next door

Are a perpetual plague; I think I'll have

To move again—knock down the house and go.

The sacrifices that these devils make!

They bring their picnic hampers and their jars

Of wine not for the gods but for themselves.

A pinch of incense and a holy cake

Are offerings of true piety; they're burnt

450

And god receives them all. But they put on

The altar for the gods only the tail
 And gall bladder, the parts they cannot eat,
 And guzzle down the rest themselves.* Old hag,
 Open the door at once. For I suppose
 I must get on with jobs inside the house. [Exit into his house]

Enter GETAS from the shrine, talking to someone inside.

GETAS. Forgot the stewing pot, you say? You must
 Be sleeping off an orgy. So now what
 Are we to do? Pester Pan's neighbours, I
 Suppose. [He crosses to KNEMON's door and calls]
 Hey, boy! [He waits] By god, I do not think
 There are more useless servants anywhere. 460
 Boys! Sex is the only thing they know about—
 Hey, lovely boys—and telling slanderous lies,
 If someone sees them at it. Come on, BOY!
 What is the matter? BOYS! No one at home?
 Hallo! there's someone running to the door,
 I think.

[KNEMON flings open the door in a rage]

KNEMON. Why are you pounding on my door,
 You miserable man, just tell me that?
 GETAS. Don't bite my head off.
 KNEMON. Yes, I shall, by god,
 And swallow you alive.
 GETAS. God, don't do that.
 KNEMON. Have you and I some contract, godless swine?
 GETAS. No contract. No, I've not come here to ask 470
 Repayment of a debt—I've brought with me
 No witnesses—but just to ask you for
 A stewing pot.

KNEMON. A stewing pot?
 GETAS. That's right.
 KNEMON. You rogue, do you think I'd sacrifice an ox
 And act the way you do?
 GETAS *[aside]*. I don't suppose
 You'd sacrifice a snail! *[To KNEMON]* Goodbye, my friend.
 The women told me to knock at your door

And ask you; so I did just that. You have
No pot. Then I'll go back and tell them so.

[*He starts off back towards the shrine*

Great gods, a grizzled viper, that he is. 480

[*Exit into the shrine*

KNEMON. They're murdering animals. They come straight up

And knock, as though I was a friend of theirs.

If I see one of them come near our door,

If I don't make him an example for

The neighbourhood, consider me a mere

Nonentity. This man, goodness knows who,

Has got away with it—I can't think how.

[*Exit KNEMON into his house*

SIKON comes out of the shrine shouting back to GETAS.

SIKON. Well, damn you! He abused you, did he? Perhaps

You asked him like a shit. [*To the audience*] Some folk have no

Idea how they should do such jobs. I've learnt

Some skill in this. For in the city I do work

490

For thousands, and I pester those next-door

And borrow pots from all. One has to use

A little flattery when making a request

For something. So, if it's an older man

Answers the door, at once I call him 'Dad'

Or 'Father'; older women I call 'Ma',

If middle aged, I greet her 'Madam dear';

If a young servant answers, say, 'Good friend';

But you deserve to hang! What ignorance!

'Boy! slaves!'; you say. I'll show you how it's done.

[*He goes to KNEMON's door and knocks*

Come out, dad, come, I want to speak to you.

[*KNEMON bursts out of the door*

KNEMON. What, you again!

SIKON. My word, what's this?

KNEMON. Provoke 500

Me purposely, will you? Did I not tell

You 'Don't come near my door'? Give me the whip,

Old woman.

[*He seizes hold of SIKON*

SIKON. No, stop that and let me go!

KNEMON. I let you go?

SIKON. I beg you, please, kind sir.

[He wriggles out of KNEMON's grasp]

KNEMON. Come back!

SIKON. God blast you!

KNEMON. You still blathering?

SIKON. I came to ask you for a pot-bucket

KNEMON. I haven't got a bucket or an axe,

Or salt or vinegar or anything.

I've told my neighbours straight they're not to come

Near me.

SIKON. You've not told me.

KNEMON. Well then, I tell

You now.

SIKON. Yes, and worse luck for you. Could you 510

Not even say where I could go and get one?

KNEMON. I warned you. Will you still keep nattering

At me?

SIKON. Good day, sir.

KNEMON. I don't want 'good day'

From any of you.

SIKON. Then, bad day to you.

KNEMON. This is intolerable! *[Exit into his house]*

SIKON. He's pretty well

Chopped me to pieces. What a thing it is

To make a polite request! It really makes

A difference! Should one try the other door?

But that's not easy, if they're all round here

So quick to put on gloves* and beat you up.

Perhaps it's best for me to bake the meat?

I think it is. I've got a roasting dish.

Goodbye to the Phylasians! I'll use 520

The things I've got to hand. *[Exit into the shrine]*

Enter SOSTRATOS from the left, rubbing his back and limping.

SOSTRATOS. If anyone

Is short of troubles, let him come to hunt

In Phyle! Agony! Oh, what a state I'm in—
 My back, my chest, my neck, the whole of me!
 For I fell to at once like a young fool;
 Swinging my mattock right up high, just like
 A navvy, I dug deep and went at it
 Much too industriously, but not for long.
 Soon I kept turning round a bit to see
 When the old man would turn up with the girl. 530
 Then, heavens! I began, first furtively,
 To feel my spine; and when an age had passed,
 I started straightening out, but I was now
 Becoming stiff as wood. And no one came.
 The sun was scorching. Gorgias looked round
 And saw me bobbing up and bobbing down,
 With my whole body, like a pumping beam.*
 'I don't think he'll come now, young man', he said.
 At once I answered, 'What are we to do?
 Shall we watch for him tomorrow? but today 540
 Let's give it up.' And Daos then appeared
 To take my mattock over. So that's how
 My first attempt turned out. I've come back here;
 By god, I can't say why, but of its own
 Accord the situation draws me here.

*Enter GETAS from the shrine in a cloud of smoke; he shouts at SIKON,
 who is inside the shrine.*

GETAS. What is this? Do you think I've sixty hands?
 It's I blow up the charcoal, fly around
 And bring the offal, wash and cut it up,
 And make the cakes, and carry round *the pots*,
 Although I'm blinded by the smoke. They think 550
 I'm just the donkey at the festival.*

SOSTRATOS. Hey, Getas!

GETAS. Who's that calling me?

SOSTRATOS.

It's me.

GETAS. And who are you?

[*Rubbing the smoke from his eyes*]

SOSTRATOS.

Can you not see?

GETAS.

I see;

My master.

SOSTRATOS. Tell me what you're doing here?

GETAS. We've just this moment made the sacrifice

And now we're getting ready lunch for you.

SOSTRATOS. Is mother here?

GETAS. She's been here ages.

SOSTRATOS.

And father?

GETAS. We're still expecting him. So in you go.

SOSTRATOS. I will, when I have done a little job.

[He turns to the audience

This sacrifice has proved quite opportune.

I'll go in as I am,* and I'll invite

This young man and his servant to the lunch.

560

For when they've shared our offerings, they'll be

More useful allies in my marriage plan.

GETAS [*grumbling to himself*]. What's that you say? You're going to invite

Some friends to lunch? As far as I'm concerned

Ask thousands; for I've always known I should

Not get a taste. How could I? Bring them all

Along. You've made a splendid sacrifice,

Well worth a look. But would the womenfolk,

Delightful ladies, give a share to me?

God, no, not even just a lick of salt.

SOSTRATOS. Getas, it'll be all right today. O Pan,

570

I'll make this prophecy myself; but still,

I'll always make a prayer to you when I

Pass by your shrine and I'll be generous.*

[Exit to left to find GORGAS and DAOS

Enter SIMICHE from KNEMON's house.

SIMICHE. O misery, and misery again!

GETAS. O hell and blast! Some woman of the old

Man's now appeared.

SIMICHE.

O, what will be my fate?

Wanting to save the bucket from the well

Myself, without the master knowing, if

I could, I tied the mattock to a weak

And rotten piece of rope, and then it broke— 580
GETAS [*aside*]. Ah, good!

SIMICHE. And so I've dropped the mattock too
Into the well to join the bucket. Oh!

GETAS [*aside*]. It's only left for you to throw yourself
In too.

SIMICHE. And master—what bad luck!—decides
To move some dung that's lying in the yard;
He's running round and looking for the fork
And shouting; now he's banging on the door.

GETAS [*aside*]. You poor old woman, run—he'll murder you—
Get out, or better still defend yourself!

KNEMON [*bursting out of his door*]. Where is the thief?

SIMICHE. Master, I did not mean
To drop it in.

KNEMON. Go on, inside!

SIMICHE. What do

You mean to do? 590

KNEMON. Do? Tie you up and let

You down the well.

SIMICHE. No, no, not that! alas!

KNEMON. I shall, and with the selfsame rope, by god.

GETAS [*aside*]. That's fine, if it is rotten through and through.

SIMICHE. Shall I call Daos from next door?

KNEMON. Shall you

Call Daos, wicked hag? you've ruined me.

Do you hear me? Quickly, get inside! [*Exit SIMICHE into the house*]
Ah me!

Unhappy in my isolation now,

Of all men most unhappy. I'll go down

Into the well. What else is left to do?

GETAS. Then we'll provide a hook and rope for you.

KNEMON [*notices GETAS*]. May all the gods blast you to bloody
hell,

You villain, if you say a word to me. 600 [*Exit into house*]

GETAS. That's fair enough. He's burst back in again.

What an unhappy man! What a life he leads!

The Attic farmer in his purest form!

Battling with rocks which bear nothing but sage
 And thyme, he reaps a crop of pain and gets
 No good from it. But I must say no more—
 The master's here, bringing his guests with him.
 They're local labourers. How very odd!
 Why is he bringing them here now? How did
 He get to know them?

Enter SOSTRATOS, GORGAS and DAOS from the left.

SOSTRATOS. I will not allow
 You to say no. 'We're all right thanks.' Good god!
 Would anyone on earth refuse to come
 To luncheon with a friend who's sacrificed?
 For I have been your friend, you know, since long
 Before I met you. [SOSTRATOS hands DAOS GORGAS' tools
 Daos, take these things inside
 And then come back.

GORGAS [to DAOS]. Don't leave mother alone
 But see to all her needs. I'll join you soon.
*[Exeunt, DAOS into GORGAS' house, SOSTRATOS and GORGAS
 into the shrine.]*

CHORAL INTERLUDE

ACT 4

SIMICHE runs out of KNEMON's house, shrieking.

SIMICHE. Won't someone help? O misery! Help! Help! 620

SIKON comes out of the shrine, grumbling.

SIKON. Good lord! by all the gods and spirits, please
 Let us get on with making our libations.*
 You wail, abuse us, beat us up! A most
 Extraordinary house!

SIMICHE. My master's down
 The well!

SIKON. How's that?

SIMICHE. How? He was climbing down
To get the fork and bucket out, when at
The top he slipped; and so he's fallen in.

SIKON. You mean that difficult old sod? Good lord,
He has done well! My dear old woman, now
It's up to you.

630

SIMICHE. What do you mean?

SIKON. Why, get
A mortar or a rock or some such thing
And drop it on him from above.

SIMICHE. Dear friend,
Go down the well.

SIKON. My god, to suffer what
The man did in the story, fight the dog
In the well!* No Thanks.

SIMICHE [*shouts*]. Where are you, Gorgias?

Enter GORGAS from the shrine.

GORGAS. I'm here. What is the matter, Simiche?

SIMICHE. You ask me what? I tell you once again,
My master's in the well.

GORGAS. Here, Sostratos,
Come out.

Enter SOSTRATOS from the shrine.

Lead on and quickly go inside.

[*Exeunt GORGAS, SOSTRATOS and SIMICHE into
KNEMON's house. SIKON is left alone on the stage*]

SIKON. The gods exist, by Dionysos! Yes.

You don't give us a stewing pot when we
Are sacrificing; you're too mean for that,
You wicked rogue? Then fall into the well
And drink it dry, so you can't give a drop
To anyone. The Nymphs have punished him
For me, as he deserved. No one can wrong
A cook and get away scot-free. Our art
Is somehow sacred. But waiters you can treat
Just as you like. [*Cries off-stage*] What? Surely he's not dead?

640

Some girl is weeping and bewailing her
Beloved dad.

[*Lacuna of four lines; then three deficient; supplements speculative.*]

That's no concern of mine [More cries off-stage]

He must be still alive. Someone perhaps

Has gone right down the well to rescue him;

650

They'll tie him to a piece of rope and so

They'll haul him up, that's obvious. Oh, what

A sight! What do you think he'll look like then,

Soaked to the skin and trembling? What a joke!

I'd love to see him, friends, by god, I would.

[*He shouts to the women inside the shrine*

But, women, pour libations for their sake

660

And pray the old man's rescue—may go wrong

And leave him lamed and crippled. For that way

He'll be a harmless neighbour to Pan here

And to the folk who come to sacrifice.

That's my concern too, if I'm hired to cook

[*Exit SIKON into the shrine*

Enter SOSTRATOS from KNEMON's house and addresses the audience.

SOSTRATOS. Friends, by Demeter, by Asklepios,

By all the gods, I never in my life

Have seen a man so nearly drowned, and so

Conveniently! What fun it was to watch!

For Gorgias, the moment we went in,

670

Leapt down into the well; the girl and I

On top did nothing; what were we to do?

Except she tore her hair and wept and beat

Her breast like mad. And I, the fool I was,

Stood by her, like her nurse, and begged and prayed

Her not to, gazing at that priceless work

Of art. But I cared less than nothing for

The casualty below, except I had to keep

On pulling him—that really was a bore.

680

And, god, I nearly sent him to his death

Three times at least; as I was gazing at

The girl, I let the rope go. Gorgias

However proved a true Atlas, held firm,
 And finally has hauled him up. When he
 Emerged, I came out here, because I could
 Control myself no longer but almost
 Dashed up and kissed the girl; I am in love
 So desperately. I'm getting ready now—
 They're rattling at the door!

*The door opens and KNEMON is wheeled out on a couch by GORGIAS
 and the GIRL.*

God help me, what

690

An extraordinary sight!

GORGIAS. Knemon,

Say if there's anything you want?

KNEMON. What should

I say? I'm not too good.

GORGIAS. Oh, do cheer up!

KNEMON. I have cheered up. For Knemon now will cease

To give you trouble for all time to come.

GORGIAS. This is the evil consequence, you know,

Of isolation. Do you see? Just now

You were within a hair's breadth of your death.

From now on, then, at your age, you must live

With someone to look after you.

KNEMON. I know,

I'm not so well. Call me your mother, Gorgias,

And say it's urgent. Troubles alone, it seems, 700

Can teach us. [*Exit GORGIAS to his house to fetch his mother;*

KNEMON appeals to his daughter

Daughter dear, please hold me tight

And help me up.

[*SOSTRATROS, seeing the girl putting her arms round*

KNEMON, is madly jealous and comes forward

SOSTRATROS. O, lucky man!

KNEMON. Why are

You standing there beside me, wretched man?

[*SOSTRATROS retires to the back of the stage*

GORGias and his MOTHER enter while KNEMON stands to make
his harangue, supported by his DAUGHTER.

[*Lacuna of five lines, then three line-endings; supplements speculative.*]

KNEMON. Listen, all of you; stand round me, while I tell you what I want.*

In the past I worked my heart out and I liked to work alone.

Neighbours seldom came to help me, so I managed by myself.

Gradually I came to realize I was better on my own.

Loneliness became habitual; I would rather die than change;

Death is welcome if you cannot live the way you want to do.

Hear then what I have decided. Myrrhine and Gorgias,

You perhaps may not approve of what I've chosen; all the same, 710

None of you could ever make me change my mind; you must
give way.

One mistake perhaps I did make—thought myself alone of all
Self-sufficient, never needing anything from anyone.

Now I see that death may strike one, swift and unpredictable;
So I've found how wrong I was then. Surely one must always
have

Someone near to help. But, truly—I was quite unbalanced
then,

When I saw, tho' men's lives differed, profit was their only
goal—

I imagined no one ever would show kindness to another. 720

This it was that caused my blindness. Now one man, and one
alone,

Gorgias, has proved my error, showing true nobility.

I'm the man who never let him near my door, who never gave
him

Help at all, who never greeted, never spoke with courtesy—

All the same it's he has saved me. Any other man, quite fairly,

Might have said, 'You don't let me near. Now I'll not come
near to you.

You yourself have never helped us, now I'll give no help to
you.

[GORGias shows signs of wanting to intervene

What's the matter, boy? So whether I am now about to
die—

Which I think is very likely; I seem ill—or I survive,
 I adopt you as my son, boy; all I own consider yours;
 I entrust my daughter to you; you must find a husband for her.
 Even if my health were perfect, I'd not find one; none would
 ever

Satisfy me. As for Knemon, if I live, then let me live
 As I wish. All else take over; manage things yourself. You are
 Sensible, thank god, and care for your own sister, as you
 should.

Split in two all my possessions; give one half to her as dowry;
 With the rest support your mother and myself. So much for
 that.

[*To his DAUGHTER*] Lie me down. I hold that no one should say
 more than he needs must. 740

This, however, you must know, boy; certain things I wish to
 say

Of myself, my way of living; if all men behaved like me,
 Law-courts would exist no longer, men would no more haul
 each other

Off to prison; war would cease then; all would live content
 with less.

But perhaps you find more pleasure in your present ways—
 good luck!—

This bad tempered misanthrope will be no longer in your way.

GORGIAS. All of this I gladly welcome. Now we quickly have to
 find,

If you agree, a husband for her.

KNEMON. Hey, I've told you what I think.

Don't, for heaven's sake, annoy me. 750

GORGIAS. Someone's here who wants to meet you—

KNEMON. No!

GORGIAS. He's asking for your daughter.

KNEMON. That's no longer my concern.

GORGIAS. He's the one who helped to save you.

KNEMON. Who?

GORGIAS. He's here.

KNEMON. Come forward, you!

[*SOSTRATOS comes forward and KNEMON has a good look at him*]

Well, he's sunburnt; he's a farmer?

GORGAS.

Yes indeed, father, he is.

He's no dandy, not the type to saunter idly all the day;

[*Six lines deficient; supplements speculative.*]

KNEMON. *I suppose then we must have him, if his family's all right.*

Gorgias, you give her to him and arrange this whole affair.

Wheel me in.

GORGAS.

Yes, certainly. Simiche, look after him.

[SIMICHE wheels KNEMON into his house followed by MYRRHINE
and KNEMON's DAUGHTER. SOSTRATOS and GORGAS are left
alone on the stage]

SOSTRATOS. Nothing's left for you to do now but betroth your
sister to me.

GORGAS. You must ask your father's blessing

760

SOSTRATOS.

Father won't oppose the match.

GORGAS. Then I call the gods to witness that I now betroth the
girl,

Sostratos, to you and give her gladly, as is only right.

For you came to seek her hand with no disguise but
open-hearted;

For this marriage there was nothing you were not prepared to
do.

Spoiled you are, yet took the mattock, dug and laboured with a
will;

This is how a man's true nature is revealed, when though he's
rich

He's prepared himself to lower to the level of the poor.

Such a man will bear with courage all the changes chance may
bring.

Proof you've given of your nature; may you only stay that way.

SOSTRATOS. Why, I hope I get much better. But self-praise
perhaps is vulgar.

KALLIPPIDES *appears on the far right of the stage.*

There, I see my father coming, smack on time.

GORGAS.

Kallippides!

He's your father?

SOSTRATOS.

Sure, that's father.

GORGAS. He's a millionaire, by god;
He certainly deserves his riches; he's a farmer none can beat.

[KALLIPPIDES *approaches talking to himself*]

KALLIPPIDES. I suppose I've been abandoned; they have eaten all
the sheep,

Gone away back to the farm now.

GORGAS. God, he really does seem famished!

Shall we tell him all this moment?

SOSTRATOS. Better wait for him to lunch.

He'll be more amenable then.

[KALLIPPIDES *suddenly sees* SOSTRATOS]

KALLIPPIDES. Sostratos, what's up? Is lunch

Finished?

SOSTRATOS. Yes, but plenty's over. In you go!

KALLIPPIDES. I'm going now. 780

[*Exit into shrine*]

GORGAS. If you like, go to your father; you can talk to him alone.

SOSTRATOS. You will stay inside then, won't you?

GORGAS. Yes, I shall not stir from there.

SOSTRATOS. Well, I shall not be a moment. Then I'll call you out
to us.

[*Exeunt—SOSTRATOS into the shrine, GORGAS into KNEMON's house*]

CHORAL INTERLUDE

ACT 5

Enter SOSTRATOS and KALLIPPIDES from the shrine, talking.

SOSTRATOS. You are not granting, father, all I wished

Nor all that I expected.

KALLIPPIDES. Have I not

Agreed to all? I do want you to have

The girl you love, indeed, I say you must.

SOSTRATOS. I think not, father.

KALLIPPIDES. Certainly, I do,

For I know well the marriage is secure
That's made by a young man inspired by love.

790

SOSTRATOS. So I'm to have the young man's sister then,
Considering him good enough for us?
How can you now say you'll not offer him
My sister's hand?

KALLIPIDES. That will not do at all.

I have no wish to take at once a bride
And bridegroom who are paupers. It's enough
To have one in the family.

SOSTRATOS. You talk

Of wealth, a thing on which you can't rely.
For if you know that it will stay with you
For ever, keep it then; don't give a share
To anyone. But where you're not the master
And hold it not by right but by the gift
Of Fortune, father, don't begrudge a share
Of this to anyone. For Fortune may
Take all from you and hand it on perhaps
To someone less deserving than yourself.
And so I say that all the time you have
It, father, you should use it generously,
To help all men and through your means enrich
As many as you can. Such deeds will live,
And if you chance to fall yourself some time,
You will receive a fair return from them.
Far better, father, is a friend you see
Than hidden treasure buried underground.

800

810

KALLIPIDES. You surely know my nature, Sostratos;

I shall not carry with me to the grave
What I have gained. How could I? It is yours.
You want to make a man your friend for good;
You've tested him? Then do so, and good luck!.
Why preach at me? Get on with it; you're right.
Give, share! I'm totally convinced by you.

SOSTRATOS. And willingly?

KALLIPIDES. Yes, willingly; that need.

Not worry you.

SOSTRATOS. Then I'll call Gorgias.

820

Enter GORGAS from KNEMON's house.

GORGAS. As I was coming out, I overheard
Beside the door all that you said from start
To finish. Well then? Sostratos, I think
You are a loyal friend, and I'm remarkably
Attached to you. But I don't wish to take
On what's too much for me, nor, if I wished,
Could I do so, I swear.

SOSTRATOS. What do you mean?

GORGAS. I give my sister to you as your wife;
But as for marrying yours, I'd like to, but—

SOSTRATOS. Why 'like to but'?

GORGAS. No pleasure, in my view,
Can come from living in the luxury
That's won by others' work; a man must make
His way himself.

830

SOSTRATOS. That's rubbish, Gorgias.

You're worthy of this marriage, don't you think?

GORGAS. I consider myself worthy of her, yes,
But when I have so little, count myself
Unworthy to receive so much.

KALLIPPIDES. Almighty god!

Your sense of honour *makes you go too far*.

GORGAS. What do you mean?

[The following seven lines are mutilated and their meaning disputed.]

KALLIPPIDES. You have *no money* yet you want

To seem *to other people to be rich*.

You see I've been convinced. *Give way yourself*.

[GORGAS *reflects*

GORGAS. You have convinced me by your words. I would

Be doubly sick, in purse and mind, *if I*

840

Refused the only man who offered me

Security.

SOSTRATOS [*to his FATHER*]. *That's splendid*. Now what's left

For us to do except to give our word?

KALLIPPIDES. My daughter I betroth to you, young man,
 To bear a crop of children in wedlock,
 And I shall give three talents as her dowry.

GORGAS. And for my sister's dowry I have one.

KALLIPPIDES. You have? Don't give too much.

GORGAS. I have the farm.

KALLIPPIDES. But, Gorgias, hang on to all of that.

Now bring your mother and your sister here
 To meet our womenfolk.

GORGAS. All right, I shall.

[Two lines deficient.]

SOSTRATOS. Let's all *stay here* tonight *and celebrate*; 850

Tomorrow we shall hold the weddings. Gorgias,
 Bring Knemon here; perhaps the old man will
 Be better off with us.

GORGAS. He will refuse

To come, my friend.

SOSTRATOS. Persuade him.

GORGAS. If I can,

I will. [Exit into KNEMON's house

SOSTRATOS. Now, father, for us men we must

Lay on a splendid binge; the ladies too
 Must make a night of it.

KALLIPPIDES. The opposite's
 More likely; they will drink, while we, I'm sure,
 Will not be short of night work. But I'll go
 And get things ready for the party now.

SOSTRATOS. Do so.

[Exit KALLIPPIDES into the shrine; SOSTRATOS is left alone

No man of sense should ever feel 860

Complete despair of any plan he makes.

All things may be achieved by care and work.

I'm now a living proof of this. One day

Has seen me win a marriage which no one

On earth would have thought possible.

Enter GORGAS with his MOTHER and SISTER from KNEMON's house.

GORGAS. Come on,

Speed up!

SOSTRATOS. This way. [*To his MOTHER in the shrine*] Mother, you must receive

These ladies. [*To GORGAS*] Knemon not yet here?

GORGAS.

Not here!

He begged me to bring out the old hag too,

So he could be completely on his own.

SOSTRATOS. What a type! invincible!

GORGAS.

That's what he's like.

SOSTRATOS. Goodbye to him then! Let us go inside.

870

GORGAS. But, Sostratos, I'm shy of being in

The company of women—

SOSTRATOS.

Nonsense, man!

Come, in you go! Now we must think we're all

One family.

[*Exeunt GORGAS and SOSTRATOS into the shrine*

Enter SIMICHE from KNEMON's house, speaking over her shoulder to KNEMON.

SIMICHE. I'm going too. And you

Will lie here on your own. Unhappy man!

What a sad character! When they all wished

To bring you to the god you still refused.

A heap of trouble is in store for you,

By both the goddesses,* much worse than now.

Enter GETAS, speaking to someone in the shrine.

GETAS. I will go in and see how Knemon is.

[*The pipe plays**

GETAS. Why play your pipe at me, you wretch? I have no time for that yet.

880

They've sent me here to see the poor old invalid. So belt up!

SIMICHE. Yes, one of you must go inside and sit yourself beside him.

I'm losing my young mistress, so I want to have a chat first,

To talk to her, kiss her goodbye.

GETAS.

That's sensible. Go on then.

I will look after him a while.

[*Exit SIMICHE into the shrine*

I made my mind up long since
To take this opportunity, but had to work a plan out.
[Two lines mutilated; supplements speculative.]

*Now let me see how Knemon is. If he's awake, I can't yet
Begin what I have planned to do.*

[He peeps in at the door

Ah good, he's sound asleep. Cook!

Sikon, come out here, come to me and hurry up! Good
heavens,

What splendid fun I think we'll have!

Enter SIKON from the shrine.

SIKON. You calling me?

GETAS. I am, yes. 890

You want to get your own back now for what you went
through lately?

SIKON. What *I* went through? You bugger off, you and your
bloody nonsense.

GETAS. That difficult old rogue's asleep and all alone.

SIKON. How is he?

GETAS. Not altogether down and out.

SIKON. Could he stand up and hit us?

GETAS. He could not stand at all, I think.

SIKON. What lovely news you give me!

I'll go inside and ask for something. He will go quite bonkers!

GETAS. But look! Suppose we drag him out and then we dump
him down here,

Bang at his door, and ask for things, and get him really heated.

I say, there'll be some fun in that!

SIKON. It's Gorgias I'm feared of— 900

If he should catch us on the job, he'd beat us up and thrash us.

GETAS. There's such a din inside the house; they're drinking; they
won't hear us.

In any case we've got to tame the fellow. We're related;

He's now one of the family; suppose he never changes,

Shall we not have an awful job to tolerate his manners?

SIKON. Then just take care that no one sees you while you hump
him out here.

GETAS. You lead the way!

SIKON. Please wait a bit. Don't steal away without me.
For heaven's sake don't make a noise.

GETAS. I'm not, by Earth.

[*They enter the house and carry out the sleeping* KNEMON
Keep right now.

SIKON. There!

GETAS. Dump him here. Now is the time. 909

SIKON. I'll lead. All right. You [*to the piper*] keep time.

[*SIKON goes to KNEMON's door and bangs loudly and rhythmically*

Boy! Boys! Hey, lovely boys! boys! Hey!

KNEMON [*waking up and groaning*]. Oh dear, oh dear! I've had it.

SIKON. Hey, lovely boys! Hey, boy! Hey, boys! Come on!

KNEMON. Oh dear! I've had it.

SIKON [*pretending to see KNEMON for the first time*]. Who's this? Do you
come from this house?

KNEMON. Of course. What *are* you after?

SIKON. I want to borrow pans from you and trays.

KNEMON. Who'll help me stand up?

SIKON. You've got some, surely. And I need seven tripods and
twelve tables.

But boys, inform the staff inside. I'm pushed for time.

KNEMON. I have none.

SIKON. You've not got one?

KNEMON. I've told you so a thousand times.

SIKON. I'm off then.

KNEMON. Oh misery! How've I got here? Whoever was it dumped
me

Before the house? [GETAS comes forward to take over

GETAS [*to SIKON*]. You then be off! It's my turn now. 920

[GETAS bangs on the door

Boy! Boys! men! women! porter!

KNEMON. Man, you're mad. You'll break the door down.

GETAS. Lend us nine rugs.

KNEMON. Wherever from?

GETAS. And eastern linen curtains

One hundred feet in length.

KNEMON. I wish I had a *whip* from somewhere.

Old hag! Where *has* the woman gone?

GETAS.

I'll try the other door here?

[GETAS *retires*]

KNEMON. Get out! Hag! Simiche! [SIKON *approaches*] May all the gods blast you, you scoundrel.

What do you want?

SIKON. I want to have a big bronze wine bowl from you.

KNEMON [*tries to get up*]. Who'll help me up?

GETAS. You have the drapes, you really have them, grandad.

KNEMON. I've not by god!

SIKON. And no wine bowl?

930

KNEMON. I'll murder that old woman.

SIKON. Sit down, don't make a sound. You flee from crowds; you hate the ladies;

And you refuse to let us take you out to join the party

With people making sacrifice. You must endure these tortures;

There's no one here to help you now. So bite your lips and listen

[Six lines deficient; supplements speculative.]

To all we did inside the shrine, preparing for the weddings.

First, *when* the ladies from your place *had come along to join us*,

Your wife and daughter were embraced and shook our hands in greeting.

They really did enjoy themselves. And I was getting ready,

Not far away, a party for the men here—you listening?

Don't go to sleep.

GETAS. No, don't.

KNEMON. Oh dear!

SIKON. What's that? You want to be there?

Now listen to the rest of it. Libations were all ready.

A couch of straw was being spread upon the ground. The tables

I myself was laying out—that was, you see, my duty—

You hear? I am the cook, don't you forget.

GETAS. He's coming round* now.

[*as SIKON warms to his description, his language becomes elevated and poetic*]

SIKON. One man was pouring vintage wine into a hollow vessel,

And mixing in the Nymphs' clear stream, he went right round
and offered

A toast to all the men; meanwhile another pledged the ladies.
You might as well pour water out into the sand!* You get me?

One of the girls, a trifle drunk, whose fair young face was
shaded, 950

Took up the rhythm of the dance, from shyness hesitating
And trembling, but another girl joined hands with her and
danced too.

GETAS. You've had a dreadful accident, poor man; now dance,
now join in.

[GETAS *tries to pull* KNEMON *to his feet*]

KNEMON. What *do* you want, you wretched men?

[KNEMON *resists*]

GETAS. Try harder; up and join in.

You are so clumsy. [They *pull him up*]

KNEMON. Don't, my god, please, don't.

GETAS. Then do you want us

To lift you in?

KNEMON. What shall I do?

GETAS. Dance, dance!

KNEMON. Oh, carry me then.

Perhaps it's better to endure the party there.

GETAS. That's good sense.

We've won! Hooray! Donax,*

Enter DONAX from the shrine.

and you as well,

Sikon, now lift him up and carry him

Inside. [To KNEMON] But you, look out! For if we find 960

You stirring things again, you may be sure,

We'll treat you pretty harshly. Someone give

Us garlands, torches!

[Garlands and torches are distributed to the actors; GETAS throws a
garland to KNEMON]

Here, this one's for you!

[To the audience] Well, if you've all enjoyed our victory

Over this tiresome old curmudgeon, then

Boys, youths and men, give us a friendly clap.
And may that noble, laughter-loving maid,
Victory, attend us always as our friend.

Explanatory Notes

The Bad-Tempered Man (Dyskolos)

- 4 *the shrine*: the shrines of Pan were often caves and there was such a shrine not far from the village of Phyle, in which dedications to Pan and the Nymphs have been found. For the purposes of the play Menander has placed it near Knemon's house and has made it large enough to hold a considerable gathering.
- 5 *Cholargos*: this was a deme of the city of Athens, some twenty miles from Phyle.
- 5 *to the Nymphs*: the Nymphs, spirits of water and trees, were often associated with Pan. The girl was putting garlands on their statues.
- 6 *burn down the door*: by ancient convention excluded lovers sometimes burnt down the door to gain access to the girl they loved.
- 9 *Perseus*: when Perseus was sent to kill the Gorgon Medusa, Athene, to help him, gave him winged sandals. He killed the Gorgon and carried off her head which turned all who looked on it to stone.
- 10 *a park . . . a public meeting place*: 'park', literally 'a colonnade'; there were several colonnades in the Agora of Athens where people would meet and talk. 'Public meeting place', literally 'the shrine of Leos', a hero whose shrine was a common meeting place.
- 10 *heavenly Twins*: Castor and Pollux.
- 14 *Some credit*: a metaphor from finance.
- 14 *rouses pity*: juries in the Athenian courts were particularly sympathetic to poor litigants who would appear in rags etc. to rouse their pity.
- 15 *Two talents*: this was a considerable sum; Kallippides, a millionaire, gives three talents as the dowry for his daughter.
- 16 *The god*: i.e. the god of love, Eros.
- 18 *just like a ship*: ships were sometimes hauled on rollers across an isthmus to shorten a journey; this must have been a bumpy passage.
- 18 *Paiania*: Paiania was a deme about twenty miles from Phyle where there was a shrine of Pan.

- 20 *the basket*: the sacred basket contained items needed for a sacrifice—the sacrificial knife, barley grains for scattering on the victim's head, etc.
- 21 *the rest themselves*: when an animal sacrifice was made, only the inedible parts were burnt on the altar for the gods; the rest, as Knemon says, was divided up and eaten by the worshippers.
- 23 *put on gloves*: literally, 'engage in sparring practice'; in ancient boxing, gloves were worn for sparring, leather thongs for contests.
- 24 *pumping beam*: this was a pivoted beam used for drawing water from wells etc.; 'a rope carrying a bucket was attached to the longer arm, a counterweight to the shorter; hauling on the rope allowed the bucket to descend into the well; the rope was then released and the counterweight caused it to bring the full bucket to the surface' (Sandbach).
- 24 *the donkey at the festival*: an adaptation of the proverbial expression 'I'm the donkey celebrating the Mysteries'; the donkey carried a load of sacred utensils etc. while the humans enjoyed themselves.
- 25 *as I am*: i.e. without bothering to dress up in his fine cloak again.
- 25 *be generous*: i.e. he will give generous gifts to Pan.
- 27 *libations*: drink offerings made as a preliminary to a sacrifice.
- 28 *the dog* | *In the well*: in Aesop's fables when a gardener went down a well to rescue his dog, who had fallen in, the dog bit him.
- 31 *God help me, what*: the metre changes to trochaics for the remainder of this scene.
- 38 *By both the goddesses*: i.e. Demeter and Persephone, a common women's oath.
- 38 from this point the dialogue (in iambic tetrameters catalectic) seems to have been accompanied with music.
- 41 *He's coming round*: the Greek means literally: 'the man's soft'; on this interpretation Getas means Knemon is softening on his resolve not to join the party.
- 42 *pour water out into the sand*: i.e. women's thirst for wine can never be satisfied, an old canard.
- 42 *Donax*: a slave called in just to help carry off Knemon.

The Girl from Samos (Samia)

- 45 *Pontos*: this is the Black Sea; Demeas had probably gone there for trade.
- 45 *the register*: at the age of 18 all male children of Athenian parents were enrolled on the register of their deme (parish).
- 45 *choregus*: the choregoi were wealthy citizens chosen to organize and pay for the production of plays for the dramatic festivals. They rivalled each other in the splendour of their productions.
- 45 *I led my tribe*: the citizen body of Athens was divided into ten tribes for political and military purposes. Moschion had been elected to command the cavalry division of his tribe (as a phylarch), an honorary position.
- 46 *Samos*: a large island off the coast of Turkey, famous for its courtesans.
- 46 *Adonis' festival*. the festival of Adonis, an eastern fertility deity, was celebrated in Attica in midsummer; women sowed seeds in pots and carried them up to the roof tops; their quick germination symbolized the rebirth of Adonis.
- 48 *sacrifice . . . cake*: wedding ceremonies included preliminary sacrifice, a ritual bath, and a banquet at which guests were given cakes made from sesame seeds and honey.
- 48 *Foul tenement*: unwanted babies were either exposed to die or farmed out to poor foster parents.
- 49 *Byzantium! just wormwood*: merchants en route to or from the Black Sea had to stop at Byzantium (Istanbul) to pay tolls. Wormwood, an extremely bitter herb, flourished round Byzantium.
- 51 *lustral water*: see note on 'ritual water' on p. 298.
- 54 *seeds of sesame*: sesame seeds were needed for the ritual wedding cake.
- 56 *ritual basket*: this contained items needed for the sacrifice—the sacrificial knife, barley grains for scattering over the victim's head, etc.
- 59 *Apollo here*: Parmenon points to the statue of Apollo which stood by the house door.
- 60 *O citadel of Kekrops' land*: quoted from a lost play of Euripides. In his passion Demeas launches into the language of tragedy but quickly recalls himself (Kekrops was a mythical king of Athens; his citadel is the Akropolis, to which Demeas could gesture from the theatre).

- 60 *Helen*: Helen, who deserted her husband Menelaus and fled to Troy with Paris, was the archetype of the faithless woman.
- 63 *the accustomed* | *Offerings*: when an animal was sacrificed, the Olympian gods received the fat and bones and other inedible bits, burnt on the altar. The meat was divided amongst the participants and sometimes portions were sent to friends who had not been at the sacrifice.
- 64 *Wife . . . him*: the metre changes to trochaics, which continue for the whole of this act.
- 67 *Loxias*: a title of Apollo.
- 68 *Tereus, Oedipus, Thyestes*: these were the most famous incestuous characters in mythology. Tereus raped his sister-in-law, Philomela, and cut out her tongue to prevent her telling anyone; Oedipus married his own mother, Jocasta, unawares; Thyestes seduced Areope, the wife of his brother Atreus.
- 68 *Amyntor's rage on*: Amyntor's son, Phoenix, was said to have seduced his father's mistress; Amyntor, in his rage, blinded him. Phoenix, like Moschion, was innocent.
- 68 *absit omen*: literally, 'I spit (into my bosom), as men say and bow to Adrasteia'; saying that he would rather have the notorious Diomnestos as son-in-law than Moschion might result in this misfortune, so he takes ritual precautions. Spitting to avert evil was a common practice; Adrasteia was a goddess who punished presumptuous words. Nothing is known of Diomnestos; there may be a reference to some contemporary scandal.
- 69 *barber's shop . . . stoa*: barber's shops, where Athenians went for their daily shave, were venues where news and gossip were exchanged. Athens was liberally supplied with stoas (colonnades) where people could sit in the shade and gossip.
- 69 *Thracian*: the Thracians were notoriously savage.
- 73 *Zeus . . . gold*: Acrisios, king of Argos, received a prophecy that his daughter Danae would bear a son who would kill him; he imprisoned her in a tower of bronze, but Zeus visited her in a shower of gold and she bore a son, Perseus, who, when he was grown up, accidentally killed his grandfather with a discus.
- 73 *Chairephon*: a notorious parasite who attended parties uninvited.
- 74 *Androcles*: nothing is known about him.
- 75 *Baktra or for Karia*: Baktria, north of Afghanistan, was the remotest

area where a Greek mercenary might find employment at this time. Mercenaries were often employed in Karia (south-west Turkey).

- 76 *You're completely . . . I believe*: the metre changes to trochaics, which continue for the rest of the play.
- 77 *Hephaistos' flame*: Hephaistos was the god of fire.
- 79 *lawful children*: Nikeratos hands his daughter to Moschion with the customary betrothal formula, 'for a crop of legitimate children'.
- 80 *lustral water*: before a marriage, bride and bridegroom had a ritual bath in water brought from a sacred spring; the 'bathboy' was a young relative of the bridegroom who brought the water; the piper provided music to accompany the wedding procession.
- 80 *Bacchus*: Dionysos, patron god of drama, in whose theatre the plays were performed. These lines are a form of the conventional ending of all the plays, which conclude with a prayer for victory in the dramatic contest.

The Arbitration (Epitrepontes)

- 81 *Syros*: the name only occurs once in the play (line 269) where it is in the diminutive form 'Syriskos'. A mosaic from a house in Mytilene, portraying the arbitration scene names him as 'Syros'. The Oxford text prefers to call him Syriskos, but perhaps there were particular reasons for Smikrines' use of the diminutive—e.g. to mark his inferiority.
- 82 *dancing girl*: literally 'harp-girl'.
- 83 *I've sprinkled salt . . . ∴* this is probably a proverbial expression, meaning 'I've added fuel to the fire'.
- 84 *two obols a pint*: in normal years a pint of wine cost one-third of an obol (there were six obols to a drachma and 6,000 drachmas to a talent).
- 84 *Four talents*: this was a very large dowry; the millionaire Kallipides in the *Dyskolos* gives a dowry of three talents for his daughter.
- 85 *Yes, yours*: Habrotonon appears to mean that if she is to succeed in her profession, lots of houses need to be turned upside down with husbands being unfaithful to their wives.
- 86 *To arbitrate*: arbitration by a neutral party was commonly used in a dispute and the decisions of the arbiter were binding.